PROVISIONAL
For participants only

E/1995/SR.14
24 March 1997

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Substantive session of 1995

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 27 June 1995, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan)

later: Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece)

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GE.95-62265 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS OF THE 1994 COORDINATION SEGMENT OF THE COUNCIL RELATING TO (I) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND (II) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AGAINST THE ILLICIT PRODUCTION, SALE, DEMAND, TRAFFIC AND DISTRIBUTION OF NARCOTIC DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES (continued) (E/1995/62)

Mrs. BAUTISTA (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that for those countries, science and technology were necessary elements for development, particularly at a time when competitiveness in world trade was the name of the game. They were therefore pleased by the cooperation established between the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), which would contribute to the 1997 overall review of the implementation of Agenda 21. They expected a lot from the proposed linkages between the CSTD and the Trade and Development Board and welcomed the delineation of responsibilities between the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions.

Despite those developments, however, and despite the designation of focal points for science and technology in United Nations organizations, and joint units in the regional commissions, an overall framework which could provide a common basis for action was still lacking, which meant there were no means for a much-needed prioritizing of needs in science and technology. That could eventually be achieved with increased information exchange and programme coordination of the various agencies, perhaps through the recently created focal points.

For the Group of 77 and China, it was essential to help developing countries strengthen their endogenous capacities in science and technology. The Secretary-General was right to have insisted in his report on the need for a participatory approach of involvement of all the major actors in development, at the grass-roots level, in accordance with national priorities.

The establishment or strengthening of national technology information centres was also vital, as were measures to promote the development, transfer, acquisition and adaptation of technology and know-how.

She noted with concern that the budget reductions in the specialized agencies had sharply reduced support in the field. The Group of 77 had been worried in 1994 about the complex formal administrative and financial procedures required to set up any inter-agency cooperative agreements. The Secretary-General did not seem to have taken any steps to make the procedures less onerous.

She called for the development of a catalogue of proven technologies that could provide an effective choice for developing countries.

Mr. NAMBA (Japan) regretted that the report of the Secretary-General failed to formulate common approaches to cooperation and to identify areas of concentration in the activities of United Nations organizations; it also failed to deal with questions of the coordination of medium-term plans, programme budgets and budget cycles to strengthen existing joint units and to facilitate the exchange of staff between different agencies. Contrary to the agreed conclusions of 1994, the Secretary-General had not sought to strengthen interaction and linkages between the CSTD, the specialized agencies and the regional commissions and their subsidiary bodies dealing with science and technology. He regretted that the report did not contain any concrete proposals on those issues.

The main problem in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system in science and technology for development was that the Member States had not been kept adequately informed about the programmes, budgets or size of the staff of the organizations and agencies involved.

The designation of focal points in the majority of the organizations concerned, and the further review to be conducted by the Council within five years, were undoubtedly useful, but before the review was carried out, it was essential for Member States to have a concrete and comprehensive picture of the situation in the United Nations system. He called on the Secretary-General to submit a new report to the Council in 1996 presenting a detailed picture of the measures to be taken in accordance with the agreed conclusions of 1994 and to mobilize the expertise of the specialized centres of the United Nations system, including the United Nations University (UNU).

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) obviously played an important role in the area under consideration, but the role of the newly established focal points in promoting serious consultations on coordination was much more important. It would also be useful for the Council to designate a lead agency at some point in the future.

Mr. SINGH (India) supported the comments made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Secretary-General gave a general idea of the activities being carried out in the field of science and technology for development, but not enough specific indications on the follow-up given to the recommendations on coordination formulated by the Council in 1994. Furthermore, although the report gave a few details on the activities, it contained no evaluation of their impact on developing countries. The annexes to the reports were nothing but a simple compilation of the technologies disseminated and not a catalogue of proven technologies which developing countries might wish to adopt.

The Council should not wait five years before undertaking a further review of the situation. It was obvious that science and technology for development was not given sufficient priority within the United Nations system. He supported the proposal of Japan that, beginning at its 1996 substantive session, the Council should have before it a new report summarizing obstacles to the expansion of the science and technology activities of the United Nations system.

Mr. DELACROIX (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the report of the Secretary-General was interesting but basically showed that the bodies and agencies of the United Nations system dealing with science and technology for development were very numerous and that it was difficult to coordinate their activities. To do so, the role of the ACC, and in particular of the IACSD, should be strengthened. The CSD and CSTD also had an important role to play. They had adopted a pragmatic, integrated approach, which was praiseworthy, but further effort was needed to define the exact, appropriate role of the CSD and to spell out its linkages with the CSTD.

Science and technology were vital elements for the sustainable development of developing countries, the integration of their economies into the world market and their increased competitiveness. Governments and intergovernmental organizations wishing to create an environment that fostered

the dissemination of science and technology must keep close track of market mechanisms and needs as well as of the activities of the private sector. That would require that all the actors of development, including research institutions and businesses, should participate in those activities.

As the contribution of science and technology to development could not be considered in the abstract, consideration of the issue should be linked to that of the technical or sectoral aspects of development, as the CSD did. It was also important to consider the actual needs and conditions of each region and country. Increased exchange of experience should be encouraged in that regard through South/South cooperation.

The dissemination of science and technology was even more efficient when people had the capacity to absorb, utilize and adapt technologies. Strengthening human and institutional capacities through education, training, and aid to research should therefore continue to be one of the priorities of the activities of the United Nations system in that field.

Mr. ANSARI (Pakistan) said he wholeheartedly supported the activities and policies of the United Nations system to promote science and technology for development. He was nevertheless concerned that the budget reductions in the specialized agencies had sharply reduced support in that field, as a result of which the work of the joint units and regional commissions had been sharply reduced. The role of the regional commissions in coordinating activities at the regional level should be enhanced. Proactive linkages should be established among regional institutions in support of expanded South/South cooperation. That was all the more necessary since the financial resources of developing countries would never suffice to mobilize the development of their scientific and technological infrastructures on the required scale. The regional commissions must therefore be given more resources to help developing countries.

Mr. MANGACHI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the widening gap in overall development and wealth between the developed and developing countries was a reflection of the scientific and technological gap. The least developed countries in particular lacked the knowledge base and infrastructure necessary to bring about the technological and structural changes required for their development in a changing economic environment. The debate in the Council should focus on how to overcome obstacles to technological acquisition

and endogenous capacity-building in the least developed countries in critical areas such as manpower development, establishment of research and development facilities, intellectual property and policy reforms.

Lack of scientific knowledge and skilled personnel in the least developed countries had so far prevented them from making progress in agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishing and food processing, as well as in laying a solid foundation for industry. International support was thus crucial in the areas of education in basic sciences and research and development activities. However, there was a need to coordinate the activities of various United Nations agencies for purposes of efficiency. The problem of budget reductions in the specialized agencies should therefore be addressed as soon as possible.

His Government welcomed the proposal to strengthen the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident coordinators as focal points for channelling assistance, particularly capacity-building. It also supported the CSD's proposal on the need to promote closer interaction between technology transfer and cooperation and networking of institutional capacities at the national level, including environmental technology centres, and to promote the transfer and adaptation of environmentally sound technologies. It was also useful to develop and strengthen regional networks of research centres, such as the African Regional Centre for Technology. The science and technology focal points designated by the relevant agencies should be coordinated and should also strive to promote projects that addressed the specific needs of the least developed countries.

Mr. OMEISH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Coordination of the activities of the various United Nations agencies raised specific problems that were not easy to solve. The issue therefore merited particularly serious consideration.

The difficulties were undoubtedly due in part to the fact that, as several delegations had already pointed out, the human element had hitherto been neglected in the transfer of science and technology. Although human resources training was first and foremost the responsibility of the Governments concerned, the United Nations system should also be able to contribute to that field.

Coordination of activities related to the transfer of science and technology was a central objective. Both the North and the South could only gain from it.

Mrs. YANG (China) said that her Government fully supported the views expressed by the Philippines and welcomed the fact that there had already been some positive response to the agreed conclusions of the Council from 1994. More energized coordination had been witnessed at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels, but more intensified efforts were needed to enhance coordination within the entire United Nations system.

China agreed with the Group of 77 that there should be an overall framework to provide a common basis for action. Her Government also endorsed India's proposal for a further review of the situation within five years.

At the intergovernmental level, the functional commissions concerned, especially the CSTD and the CSD, should strengthen their interaction. At the inter-agency level, the designated focal points should stay in regular contact on all matters related to science and technology for development. At the regional and country levels, coordination should be enhanced in such a way that national strategies, plans and programmes related to science and technology for development could be effectively implemented. In that connection, the budget reductions imposed on the specialized agencies were of great concern. As developing countries had a particular need to strengthen their competitiveness and enhance their capacities, the United Nations system should release sufficient resources to help them to acquire, adapt and develop their scientific and technological competence. The financial problem should be tackled urgently, and it could be done only with strong political will.

Mr. BLANEY (United States) said that progress had been made towards enhancing coordination within the United Nations system in the field of science and technology for development, particularly with the designation by most of the United Nations agencies and bodies of focal points for science and technology; in those fields, however, the agencies continued to implement programmes with overlapping activities. Clearly, then, machinery was needed that was both solid and dynamic for ensuring coordination of those activities, but it was also apparent that a discussion of the reorganization and

simplification of the CSTD's work was part of the broader debate on the United Nations reform currently under way in other forums, such as the Special Working Group on the Agenda for Development.

As the first stage towards enhanced coordination, new programme ideas and concepts could already be sought and submitted to agencies with common areas of interest. The collection and analysis of information on science and technology programmes implemented within the system could also be coordinated. Existing research management systems, and the new electronic network for coordination among donors on research and capacity-building in developing countries within the framework of Agenda 21, could be more widely utilized to that end.

Mr. SINON MUDZAKIR (Malaysia) supported the statement made by the Group of 77 and said he shared the concerns expressed by Japan and India.

While he welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General's report had provided food for thought on activities in the field of science and technology for development, it nonetheless neglected to mention the future direction of those activities.

The promotion of science and technology required sectoral interventions as well as complementary intersectoral action. It was also necessary to set up a specific national framework that was adapted to national needs and could facilitate the proper implementation of technical assistance programmes. Such a framework should be taken into account in programme evaluation and coordination. Currently there was a proliferation of programmes, the impact of which was difficult to assess.

It would be extremely valuable to set up information networks enabling needs and capacities to be matched. The experience gained from the Global Resources Information Database (GRID) should be capitalized on and expanded. A new grouping was called for, given that, as indicated in the report, various agencies were currently involved in overlapping efforts. The creation of a system-wide user-oriented network should receive priority attention and support, particularly in terms of resources.

It was extremely important that the thematic sub-groups in the field of science and technology, called for in the context of coordination at the

national and regional levels, should be based on initiatives from the countries themselves. The respective roles of UNDP and the regional commissions should be defined at the appropriate time in an effort to achieve efficiency.

As the gap between developing and developed countries only continued to widen in the field of science and technology, and as the costs of technology were constantly rising, more suitable machinery should be defined which would facilitate technology transfer to developing countries; that in turn would involve a reconsideration of South/South cooperation and recognition of the important role of the private sector.

Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil) welcomed the efforts being made by the United Nations in enhancing inter-agency coordination in science and technology for development, as well as the particularly constructive suggestion made by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development to strengthen linkages between the CSD and the CSTD. Unless the transfer of environmental technology were facilitated, developing countries would face even greater challenges in adhering to sustainable patterns of growth. Flows of technology transfer were increasingly handled by the private sector, which was a positive trend, as it ensured greater transparency. Accordingly, Brazil welcomed the initiatives to pool resources and supported the recommendation to set up multiple coalitions focused on specific themes and including both the private and public sectors. The growing role of the private sector in the transfer of technology, and the idea of treating technology transfer from a sectoral approach, however, should not be used as an argument for undervaluing the relevance of the international debate on science and technology. Besides the sectoral difficulties, there were structural shortcomings in the transfer of technology, and they should be adequately discussed and treated at the highest level.

Mr. ZEBRAKOVSKY (Czech Republic) agreed with the ideas advanced in some of the statements, particularly those of France and the United States, and welcomed the conciseness of the report of the Secretary-General. He endorsed the notion that the CSD and the CSTD should work closely together, the former playing the pivotal role, especially with regard to inter-agency coordination, without however becoming a universally competent body responsible for solving all problems. Coordination of the activities of the

specialized agencies in the promotion of technology should be considerably enhanced. He welcomed the efforts already undertaken by many of those agencies, but the exchange of information continued to pose a problem; it was the source of duplication and of wasted time and resources. Existing resources, technical instruments and communications networks should be fully utilized. The official documents of the Economic and Social Council were not always available on the Internet, although they could be. That issue should be addressed immediately.

Many countries, including countries in transition, possessed facilities and resources in the field of science and technology for development. While his country was not a major stakeholder in terms of its participation and integration in the related global effort now under way, it was nonetheless stimulated by the challenge posed by that effort.

Mrs. BIRGIN (Australia) welcomed the progress made by the United Nations in promoting inter-agency cooperation in the field of science and technology for development. She supported the Secretary-General's recommendation to pursue efforts to strengthen cooperation and collaboration, and welcomed in particular the designation of focal points for science and technology for development in most of the agencies. The overall objective of inter-agency collaboration should be to strengthen the efficiency of United Nations machinery by making the best possible use of resources, responding to the needs of Member States and avoiding duplication.

At the present time it was impossible to implement activities in support of development without considering their environmental impact. In the implementation of global programmes, such as Agenda 21, or in the follow-up to the recent series of world conferences, a more interdisciplinary approach was needed, which required closer inter-agency collaboration. The science and technology programme should be reviewed within the next five years to assess its progress and efficiency.

The PRESIDENT invited the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development to respond to the comments just made.

Mrs. WALLER-HUNTER (Director of the Division for Sustainable Development) recalled that the current debate was the continuation of the 1994 debate on science and technology for development.

The report of the Secretary-General had stressed, although perhaps insufficiently, the vital importance of science and technology for promoting development, and described all the coordination efforts undertaken to that end. It was difficult to consider the question of science and technology in abstract or general terms: rather, the issue must be linked to the different sectors, to their evolution as well as to certain cross-sectoral areas. The Council could refer to the CSTD report, which presented priority directions to be taken by subsequent work; those directions could be tested for coordination purposes both within the United Nations system and at the regional and national levels.

Furthermore, the functional commissions, such as the CSD, had team leaders whose role was to supervise coordination of the scientific and technological aspects of each sector.

Much had been accomplished since the Council's previous session, but to evaluate the effects of currently proposed measures required time, which was why the Secretary-General was suggesting the situation should be further reviewed over the coming five years.

It was difficult to evaluate the system's financial contribution to the field of science and technology, as most of the activities concerned different sectors and dealt with cross-sectoral areas, so that it was not easy to identify exactly what proportion of the budget was allocated to science and technology at the various levels, including at the national level. Practice would show what was feasible.

With regard to the question of information systems, which had been raised by numerous delegations, the CSTD's report stated that new work was needed if the Economic and Social Council were to be kept fully informed of developments. Once again, to consider the field of science and technology in isolation would not be the best approach, and it would be better to link its development to that of certain specific sectors or cross-sectoral areas.

The PRESIDENT invited the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development to take the floor.

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) responded to some of the points raised during the 1994 debate on the question.

Coordination in the field of science and technology was in many respects one of the most difficult undertakings, not only at the global level but also at the national level, and for reasons that were not always very clearly perceived. The question was, in particular, whether it was better to secure coordination at the sectoral programme level or at the overall science and technology level; experience suggested that, at both the national and global levels, the former option was more efficient, for example with regard to agricultural research within the framework of the educational system. If, on the other hand, it was a matter of scientific education or interdisciplinary research, which evidently had an impact on several sectors, it was more or less recognized that coordination must be effected at the level of the organization in charge of science and technology, whether it be a ministry or a specialized national body. One of the reasons for the dilemma was that it was very difficult to create one single body in charge of coordinating all activities in the field of science and technology. In addition, very different mechanisms and modalities had been developed at the national level. Even in the case of information systems, it was not entirely certain that a single centre providing information on new technologies was the best solution. A host of solutions had been envisaged, ranging from decentralization to several centralized options.

Instead of seeking coordination at the global level of science and technology, it had therefore been decided in 1994 to define five or six thematic sub-groups coming under several organizations. The idea was that the system-wide coordination work would be very clearly oriented towards those topics.

The Secretariat had stressed that the amount of resources allocated by United Nations bodies to science and technology was very small compared to the considerable sums spent at the national level, and that the role of the system was to a large extent that of catalyst.

It had also been observed that all the United Nations bodies concerned with development were implementing activities that dealt with science and technology, since capacity-strengthening and technical assistance were at the heart of their work. Creating further coordination machinery in the science and technology field which would overlap with coordination of activities being undertaken by other forums should therefore be avoided.

Consideration of the various issues debated in 1994 had led to the implementation of several proposals. Many organs had designated focal points for science and technology. As to information systems, the work was primarily going on within the framework of existing networks, including all the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Earthwatch. There were also the industrial environment network of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and UNDP's network for sustainable development, but much remained to be done to combine those initiatives and vastly improve access, particularly in developing countries, to information sources on new technologies. It was within that framework that UNIDO had organized a round table, the primary objective of which had been to obtain commitments from interested parties to coordinate the work of the organizations and to develop information systems on new technologies. The field demanded a lot of work, which the Secretariat was prepared to perform.

The problem of coordination in the field of science and technology at the global level was particularly complex, given that a good part of the work was already being carried out as part of a rather sectoral coordination process. Any comments on how to make progress in the matter would be welcome.

Mr. OMEISH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said it was easy to talk about coordination but difficult to find a practical way to implement it, both at the national level and in the United Nations system, with regard not only to technology transfer but also to a broad variety of fields, each with its own method of work and mind set. All the national institutions should, accordingly, be reexamined; any overlaps that might exist between the different fields of work should be identified; and an attempt should be made to identify which institution could be asked to ensure national coordination. After that, it would be possible to move to the next stage and see how international institutions were working in each country, beginning with the United Nations bodies, and in a spirit of understanding and agreement. The representatives of the organizations in particular countries did not always demonstrate sufficient flexibility and were unable to adapt to the exigencies of coordination.

He hoped that coordination efforts would intensify, but the difficulty was to define the practical mechanisms that would enable the common objective to be met, namely, to help countries despite the large number of bodies responsible for that task.

The necessary funds would have to be found to create an efficient mechanism but also to take a new look at the different institutions and examine them afresh. Coordination in each country must depend on the resident coordinator, but the task was not an easy one. It was essential for the institutions to put their particular sensitivities aside so as to concentrate solely on their objective - assistance to countries.

Mr. PEDROSO (Cuba) said that international coordination in the field of science and technology was a very arduous task, and he was surprised by the absence of representatives of important organizations in that field, such as for example the United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development or the Joint ECLAC/UNCTAD Group on Transnational Corporations and Foreign Investment. The Economic and Social Council could have benefited from their participation in order to look at ways of enhancing coordination in the field of science and technology. It was difficult, certainly, but not impossible, to set up machinery that would integrate all the pertinent factors, without being limited to the CSD, valuable though its contribution might be.

Science and technology raised not only financial questions but also questions of a basically political nature. Once machinery capable of coordinating and defining principles for action at the system-wide level had been created, each organization could be in charge of applying them in its own area of competence. Such an organization was currently lacking, and Cuba was prepared to collaborate in order to fill the vacuum.

Mr. KRAMER (Canada) said there was increasing inequality in today's world in the ability of countries to absorb the effects of science and technology. Doubtless because of financial restrictions, priority was given to needs in the social sector, but it would be a shame for science and technology to suffer from that.

What had been said with regard to coordination between the CSD and the CSTD was encouraging, but it would be interesting to know how relations were evolving between those two bodies and UNCTAD, on the one hand, and UNEP, UNIDO and UNU on the other.

The sectoral approach to coordination seemed the most appropriate on the practical level, particularly if dynamic linkages could be created with the private sector, with the United Nations acting as catalyst. He wondered whether the United Nations system was capable of evaluating and monitoring the progress made and of determining whether the results had the desired effect.

Mr. SINGH (India) said that, although he did not wish to deny the importance of the sectoral aspect of coordination, its intersectoral aspects should be stressed.

Only the development of basic science and technology would enable developing countries to make their own contribution to specific fields.

At the present time, emphasis was being placed on the transfer of science and technology in the private sector, but that was not enough. Only if they achieved the autonomous development of science and technology would developing countries be in a position to improve their ability to negotiate transfers. The United Nations system must critically evaluate those fields in which transfer appeared to be the best way to help countries develop their own capacities.

As to the relations between the CSD and the CSTD, care should be taken to prevent the latter from becoming a subsidiary of the former. Coordination went way beyond the scope of the environmental field, where a consensus existed only on the very limited issue of pollution, and covered very diverse fields. The question should therefore be considered within the broader perspective of the development of science and technology in general.

Mr. ABARCA (Mexico) said that in 1991, the total expenditures of the United Nations system in the critical field of science and technology had been minimal, at about $36 million, or 3 per cent of all programme expenditures; similarly, expenditures in that field by UNDP or coming from central resources had been $52 million, or 4 per cent of all available resources.

The activities of the various bodies were complementary and not parallel, each involved in its own sphere of competence. The regional organizations insisted on regional cooperation, but they could play a more decisive role in drawing up coordinated national and regional policies in the field of science and technology on which to base practical action in support of the economic and technological development of the various regions, within the framework of technical cooperation among developing countries.

According to the study on science and technology for development requested by the ACC, by reason of their specialized nature the activities of the United Nations bodies did not overlap, but the resources allocated to technical cooperation in the field were too fragmented to make a lasting contribution.

The CSTD, for which UNCTAD acted as secretariat, had been created in 1993 as part of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. However, centralized coordination of all the system's activities in that field was neither feasible nor desirable. It would be better to concentrate on specific sectors that were of interest to more than one body or programme.

The role of the Economic and Social Council, responsible for coordinating all the organizations within the system that dealt with science and technology, should be strengthened. There should also be coordination not only between the CSD and the CSTD but also between them and the regional commissions, and between institutions at the global, regional and national levels.

Given that science and technology were instruments of national development, they should be related on a more functional level to the priorities of development, particularly those of interest to UNDP's operational activities, in order to increase the funds allocated to them.

Mr. BURNETT (United Kingdom) said he shared the concerns expressed by France on behalf of the European Union as to the unclear role played by the CSTD and its linkages with other intergovernmental bodies. He asked Mr. Desai to elaborate on how the CSD and the CSTD had improved their interaction, since reports from the latest meetings had seemed less positive. The different

locations and participation certainly did not help and, generally, the CSTD risked being isolated. In 1993, most of the agencies had been inadequately represented. The Economic and Social Council should play an ongoing and more active supervisory role so as to enable he CSTD to play its proper part.

Mr. ROFFE (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) said that new responsibilities had been entrusted to UNCTAD in the economic and social sector as part of the restructuring of the United Nations system. The work of the CSTD concerned not only the CSD; since 1993, it had dealt with a great variety of topics related to recent or upcoming major conferences, such as, for example, during the forthcoming inter-sessional period, on information technology. Based on the Council's agreed conclusions of the July session in 1994, the CSD had decided, where possible, to coordinate possible studies carried out between two sessions on specific issues. It had been decided that the CSTD would concentrate on the more specifically scientific and technological aspects of Agenda 21.

During the period 1993-1995 - ever since it had been mandated to provide support in that field - the UNCTAD secretariat had benefited from the active assistance of various bodies and agencies in the United Nations system, and particularly from that of the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

Mr. Papadatos (Greece) took the Chair.

Mrs. BIRGIN (Australia) said that Mrs. Waller-Hunter and Mr. Desai had not really answered the question raised by Japan about one of the Council's agreed conclusions, namely, the combining of resources and staff of United Nations bodies. She asked for further details.

Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil) said that the hopes placed by developing countries in the activities of the United Nations system in the field of science and technology had inevitably given way to frustration. That did not mean that the United Nations had not helped make countries more aware of the impact of science and technology on development. The Secretary-General's report testified to the efforts undertaken by the system to improve inter-agency coordination in order to put science and technology at the service of development. He welcomed the proposed strengthening of linkages

between the CSD and the CSTD. Without such coordination in the environmental field, it would be still more difficult for developing countries to attain the objective of sustainable growth.

Technology transfer was increasingly an affair of the private sector: that was a positive development, because it meant greater transparency, but it should not eliminate the responsibility of States and Governments, any more than the need for an international debate on the issue. Multiple coalitions of resources focused on specific themes and the call to the private sector proposed by the Secretary-General were to be encouraged.

Mr. NAMBA (Japan) regretted that, as he had said earlier, the Secretary-General's report contained neither specific suggestions nor specific strategies for applying the measures defined in subparagraphs 11 (b), (c) and (d) of the Council's agreed conclusions. Nor was there any mention in the report of strengthening the linkages between the CSTD and the United Nations specialized agencies and other bodies, as called for in paragraph 13 of the conclusions.

The Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development had rightly insisted on the importance of technology transfer for promoting the economic and social development of developing countries. However, the activities to be undertaken in the field of science and technology for development should not be limited to encouraging that transfer; they must be broader in scope. To promote technology transfer, machinery must be created that would allow for the dissemination of technology, which was critical if the goal was to contribute to the world's development. Scientific and technological development had been the basis for progress in the Japanese economy. A major effort was needed in that domain.

Mr. MANGACHI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that, for the least developed countries which were poorly equipped for technology transfer, the question of choosing between general technology and ecologically sound technology, for example, was quite secondary. What was vital for them was to be helped to acquire an infrastructure with which they could integrate the technologies and adapt them to their own needs. That meant that activities intended to strengthen the capacities of the least developed countries would

have to be intensified. If those countries were not to feel marginalized, it was important to focus the debate on those issues, rather than dealing with coordination in the abstract.

Mr. MUDZAKIR (Malaysia) said that, in order to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries, which was growing ever wider, the formula of creating centres of excellence for new technologies was interesting and merited careful consideration. If no structure was created, it would be extremely difficult for the developing world, particularly the least developed countries, to have access to new technology.

The regime applicable to technology transfer should also be revised, as it was very restrictive. Property rights in particular were of very long duration. The United Nations had a role to play in that regard. It should work towards a reform of that regime so that developing countries could have easier access to technology in all its forms.

The United Nations also had an important role to play in the field of information systems, where efforts should be made to match capacities with needs.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) said that no cooperation had really been established yet between UNCTAD and the CSTD, even though they both had an important role to play. His Government would closely follow future measures taken towards that end, as it was vital for the two bodies to coordinate their scientific and technological activities, especially for the application of the measures called for under chapters 16 (environmentally sound management of biotechnology), 34 (transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation and capacity-building) and 35 (science for sustainable development) of Agenda 21.

It was crucial that the United Nations bodies should take into account the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council with regard to coordination of their activities aimed at strengthening national capacity in the science and technology field. Such coordination would help to facilitate technology transfer and would fit in with the interests of developing countries, particularly the least developed among them.

It was also vital that those bodies should cooperate at the national level with governmental bodies, taking due account of the priorities and decisions of the authorities. At the regional level, coordination should be effected through regional institutions and other competent authorities.

Mr. BROMLEY (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that the globalization process under way and the intensified competition only served further to emphasize the priority nature of activities in the field of science and technology, which had been highlighted in the 1979 Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development. During the previous 10 to 15 years, many organizations had set up centres of excellence and capacity-building programmes in the science and technology field, but they had done so within their own sectoral frameworks. UNIDO, for example, had taken such steps in the industrial field.

More wide-ranging action should be undertaken at the intersectoral level, although that was not always easy. The CSTD, with which UNIDO cooperated very closely, could perhaps give general indications as to which science and technology subjects the specialized agencies could study.

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said he wished to provide clarification on several issues and to dispel misunderstandings apparently arising from some of his comments. First of all, he had never claimed that science and technology was not a field for specific action. What he had meant to say was that, in order to coordinate scientific and technological activities effectively, such coordination must be assured by people who were well acquainted with the activities to be coordinated.

He was the first to acknowledge that basic research was one of the key sectors deserving of priority attention. It was extremely important to pursue efforts to strengthen the capacity of developing countries in that field. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which played an essential role in that connection, participated actively in all the processes of coordination set up within the system.

Secondly, he had mentioned relations between the CSTD and the CSD only as an example of constructive collaboration. He had in no way intended to imply that the CSTD's sole function was to serve the CSD. The CSTD would have to deal with many other issues pertaining to the fields of activities of other

bodies, as well as with purely scientific and technological matters unrelated to its work. As its programme of work demonstrated, the CSTD's task was not confined to providing support to a particular procedure undertaken within the framework of the United Nations system.

Sustainable development and science and technology for development were perhaps the two areas in which collaboration at the intergovernmental level had been the most active and the most effective. The Chairpersons of the two Commissions, which were mutually complementary and worked closely together, were due to meet shortly to plan a joint meeting of their bureaux. It was to be hoped that such cooperation would be established in other sectors.

Turning to the questions raised about the role of UNCTAD, he said that the bodies, organizations and other entities of the United Nations system engaged in the field of science and technology (UNIDO, UNCTAD, Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) were working closely together and, given the current scarcity of resources, none of them was looking to undertake activities which other organizations were willing to handle. Within the United Nations itself, it was UNCTAD that was the lead agency for activities on science and technology for development.

Many speakers had asked what steps the United Nations organizations could take, were already taking or should take to promote the dissemination of technology. At the global level, in the first place it was a matter of facilitating access by national entities to available information on technology, as various United Nations bodies and organizations, including UNIDO but also other organizations outside the system, such as the European Union, were endeavouring to do.

It was to be hoped that the action undertaken would enable user-friendly interfaces to be developed so that the populations of developing countries could cut their way more easily through the thicket of current information systems. Instead of investing in those systems, it would perhaps be preferable to allocate the scant resources available to developing such interfaces and supporting activities aimed at promoting access of developing countries to all information systems.

With regard to the formulation of common approaches, matters were progressing in the context of the sectoral processes. Many of the sectoral activities of the United Nations system were related to science and

technology. For example, many of the activities of aid to developing countries being carried out within the framework of the World Climate Programme pertained to that field. The same was true of much of the work undertaken by the International Programme on Chemical Safety.

The figures for resources allocated to science and technology actually concerned only science and technology activities as such. For example, financial aid for the creation of a meteorological research centre would be mentioned in the context of activities on meteorology and would not be classified with activities in the science and technology field. That posed a real dilemma, one which was also to be found in national budgets. It was often difficult to determine whether an activity was specifically part of the science and technology field or whether it was a support activity for a particular sector.

In the United Nations, the coordination of medium-term plans and budgets occurred naturally, since the budget process was the same for all bodies. Furthermore, the programme budgets of the different bodies and other entities with science and technology activities (UNCTAD, Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, etc.) were considered within the context of the Organization's overall budget.

A major effort was also made to harmonize the programme and budget cycles of UNDP and other bodies so as to pave the way for more coordinated action at the country level.

As to the strengthening of the coalition groups and the secondment or exchange of staff, it had to be admitted that, in a time of reduced budgets and staff cuts, the coalition groups were under particular threat, as organizations were naturally tempted, in dealing with those problems, to refuse to second staff to other bodies. In any event, the United Nations organizations that were involved in combining efforts and undertaking joint programming hoped to be able to continue with staff exchanges and secondments when necessary.

One speaker had asked whether it was really possible to evaluate the results of scientific and technological activities and to draw any lessons from them. The Joint Inspection Unit had recently evaluated programmes being carried out in the science and technology field in Africa. The evaluation showed that only 50 per cent of the programmes had been successful. According

to the Inspectors, the low success rate was due in particu'ar to the fact that many projects had been undertaken without anyone bothering to find out whether the national authorities could take over from the international organization at the appropriate time. Many programmes also apparently failed because they were not part of the policy of the national authorities and had not taken the national budgetary and planning processes into account.

If the United Nations system were truly to act as a catalyst, it would have to be concerned not only with the different activities but also with ensuring that they were fully integrated into country programmes.

At the national level, the most important consideration was undoubtedly to strengthen national capacity so that countries could set their own priorities in the science and technology field, determine what aid they needed and coordinate support activities undertaken by the United Nations system at their request.

At the global level, it was important to utilize the machinery available through the CSTD and other subsidiary bodies of the United Nations system so as to ensure that some of the purely science and technology issues with which the public authorities at the national and international levels would have to continue to be concerned received the attention they deserved.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.